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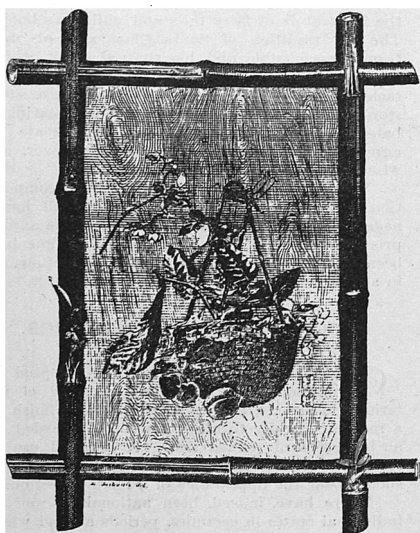
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SCREEN IN BAMBOO, JAPANESE WORK.

## JAPANESE ART WORKS.

## THE INTERIOR OF A JAPANESE HOUSE DESCRIBED.

IN one of the upper salesrooms of the First Japanese Manufacturing and Trading Co., this city, are two rooms constructed and furnished in true Japanese style, affording strangers and visitors an opportunity to study the method of construction and manner of furnishing and decorating the interior of a Japanese home. The frame and all parts of this miniature house were made in Tokio by a first-class mechanic, then shipped here, and put up where it is now seen.

To Americans, these rooms reveal much that is curious. Ascending a few steps one passes through a door entering a "tea room," under the feet is matting, making the floor unusually soft and springy. The universal floor covering in the private houses of Japan is matting, and it is laid on a cushion or bed of straw about six inches thick, enclosed in cloth and corresponding in width to the matting. In most houses this straw is renewed about twice a year, and makes an elastic floor. As these people always put off their shoes or clogs before entering, there is little danger of the floor becoming soiled or worn for a long time.

In describing the size of an apartment, we would give the dimensions each way in feet and inches; the Japanese say—it is a room of so many mattings, each matting indicating a part of a floor covering three by ten feet in size. There are outer and inner windows in each house, the outer being an aperture closed with a solid wooden shutter when the state of the weather requires it, and the inner lighting the room through paper instead of glass stretched over the sash. The doors connecting the rooms are similar in size and appearance to screens; they slide past each other, and sometimes as many as six are in a door space. When company is entertained, these screen doors are removed entirely, thus making one large room out of many small ones.

The wood work and interior finish in private dwellings are very simple; the doors and window frames are without moldings, and there are no wainscotings or mantel carvings.

It is considered in the best taste to have all interior work of the plainest description, unpainted and unvarnished. Repeated dustings and rubbings give to the natural wood a polished surface and a mellow tint.

The walls are covered generally with a small patterned paper as well as the ceilings, although the latter occasionally is divided with geometrical precision and covered with woven bamboo in different colors.

In every room ample arrangement is made for ventilation. In one part of the reception room or parlor of the house is a platform raised about six inches from the floor, where an honored guest is always seated the host kneeling on the floor before him and serving him. Cushions take the place of chairs and the tables of European homes are unknown.

Censers, cabinets, and bronze pieces are placed in the principal rooms, and hanging scrolls ornament the walls.

The furnishing and ornamenting as above set forth can be seen any day.

In this store is a representative assortment of the artistic goods of Japan; perhaps most promi-

nent are objects in metal, silverware, bronzes, etc. One fine example is an urn of solid silver valued at \$2,000; it is of antique form not above eighteen inches high and eight in diameter, the large cost resulting from the artistic and educated labor bestowed upon it. The main decoration surrounding the body is a group of persons representing mythological subjects, but every portion is enriched by chasing, hammering, inlaying, and combining of metals and lacquer, and enamels by which a most delicate and poetical effect is produced. This is known as Zogan work.

Castings in bronze, metal alloys, gold, silver and iron, in the forms of vases, censers, kettles, plaques, trays, and numberless things useful and ornamental, are on every hand at all sorts of prices.

Among the cheap articles are silver bronze bells, \$4.00; trays of bronze (imitation of basket weaving) \$2.50; grotesque bronze paper weights, \$2.00; fanciful ink stands of bronze, \$2.00; smoking sets, comprising a tray in the form of a leaf, tobacco box, ash receiver, cigar and match holder, \$12.00; crumb brush and tray in bronze, \$5.00; silver cigar boxes, \$12.00. It is in these small objects especially that metal work is shown in wonderful perfection.

In no country in the world has the casting and decoration of metal work been practiced with such magnificent results as in Japan.

The variety in the work produced is endless, for no two objects are precisely alike; each has a special character resulting from the personal work of the modeler, and each affords a fine illustration of individuality of work and refined art feeling; these are reasons why it is so satisfactory to own a beautiful article of Japanese manufacture.

An ivory cup made from a section of elephant tusk and resting on a stand of rich wood inlaid with gold lacquer, are together valued at \$2,000. The cup was made for the Second National Exhibition at Tokio, and the carving and labor expended on it represent two years' time of an educated artisan. Groups of human figures are massed under willow trees and every detail of feature and texture of dress are achieved in form and color by the use of metals, mother of pearl, dyes and other mediums known alone to the strange artists of Japan.

Screens are of every kind and character, from a single to four and six parts; a rich gentleman of Japan collects screens as one here does oil paintings. Great skill and ingenuity is shown in their manufacture, and the best pictorial art in the kingdom appears devoted to their decoration.

Many novelties in this line are being imported to this country, among them three or four-fold screens, the upper and lower portions of which are of dark wood carved in fanciful open-work patterns, the center being composed of a transparent paper background decorated in water colors, over which is placed a light wood lattice work. Natural or artificial light shining through them produces a very peculiar and handsome effect.

There is here on exhibition a Yuzen velvet screen of four pieces, of the same style which has been manufactured for the Mikado's palace in Tokio. The design of each panel is different, one represents ducks swimming near a green bank under full foliaged trees.

Every detail of this design, embodying the tracery and color of foliage and vegetation, the plumage of birds, and the effects of water and sky, is cut from velvet, fitted in place on the panel and afterwards fast dyed, which admits of washing or cleansing at any time. This screen is worth \$500.00.

Under the feudal system which existed in Japan for centuries, the best art work was fostered and accomplished. The barons, or daimiōs, ruled whole provinces and sought skilled workmen who could manufacture objects such as they desired, for personal use or presents.

These workmen lived in the precincts of the baronial palace, were fed and clothed as the servants of the household, allowed to marry and received favors for the production of works of special merit. The necessities of time or circumstance never annoyed them; they lived under the conditions of leisure and rest most favorable to artistic work. The workmen wrought and prided themselves on their workmanship and art; such perfect examples of beauty were produced that they cannot be equalled at the present day. Gold lacquer work especially prospered during this period.

A choice specimen of antique lacquer-work is shown here, being a writing table and box. The modeling is in low relief, and there is given to the gold a peculiarly "clouded" effect; no bright tones or colors are used. The decoration on the inside of the box lid is equal to that on the outside. It is by a master hand—a thing to be loved and treasured. It was not made with any view to

its money value, but by a handicraftsman whose sole care and aim was to please his master.

It is so perfectly worked, so rich in decoration, so minute in detail, and so softly smooth of surface, as to be almost more perfect than the most fragile porcelain.

In art merit such an object exceeds almost any of the bric-a-brac now collected. This is valued at \$500.00.

A few years since lacquer objects of the highest excellence could be purchased at a trifling cost, but now these old works are so much sought after by the Japanese themselves, as well as by those of advanced taste in England, France and America, that they are becoming both rare and costly. Indeed, so valuable has old lacquer now become in Japan, that pieces have been returned from London and New York, to the country in which they were made, in order to be sold.

A jewel box, six inches high and twelve square, the design being an imitation of brocaded silk, was made for the last Paris Exposition, and is a sample of the finest modern work in lacquer. Price \$800.00.

Inlaid and lacquered cabinets are of all sizes and prices.

Lest any one should rest in the belief that the importations of Japan are generally too expensive for ordinary enjoyment, we name hanging wall pockets, highly decorated, at 75c. each; quaint storks, birds and animals, made of cotton, from 25c. to \$1.50; decorated panels, three feet long and five inches wide, for 75c.; lacquered wall brackets, 75c.; Japanese wall paper, tough as leather, in embossed or raised figures, of a subdued tone, and generally a gilt pattern, comes in rolls of eight or ten yards, and costs from \$5 to \$10 per roll; cotton chintz, printed in gilt and in small figures of black and gilt, used as portières, draperies and for purposes of decoration, can be had 42 inches wide, for 50c. a yard; bamboo and paper hangings, hand painted in water colors, brighten up the rooms of country houses; they are of all sizes, some on rollers and others without, and prices range from 25c. to \$5.00.

Screens, already spoken of, are made for everybody, and the demand for them constantly increases, especially the high-priced ones; painted designs on figured silk are used for covering glass door panels, and give a beautiful effect, 75c. to \$1.50 each.

Fans and parasols are supplied in unlimited quantities; for cheap decorative effect nothing surpasses them. Our people like them because of the correct workmanship, and the quaint beauty and brightness in the designs.

Perhaps the greatest compliment we can pay such an ingenious people as the Japanese is to designate them by the honorable title—Yankees of the East.

## MY DISAGREEABLE NEIGHBORS.

I HAVE two grievances to complain of in my neighborhood: one against the builder of a Gothic chapel, who has ornamented its front with a semblance of candles and extinguishers, and the other against a man who keeps a couple of lions in his front yard. They are iron lions, and as such were well enough. If a man must keep lions in the family to make him happy the iron breed is better than the African variety. My grievance is that he has placed these lions on each side of his front door steps and painted them to look like the real things. He has given them a coat of tawny bronze, has made their feet and tail tips brown, and their eyes would facilitate delirium tremens in any hilarious individual going by in the small hours, for they glare into the darkness with startlingly black pupils and white rims. Now, if a lion is to be a lion put him in a cage, but if he is a palpable cast iron imitation, manufactured for merely decorative purposes, then don't try to make him appear like a living beast of prey, but let it be seen that he is made of metal and quite harmless. As for the architect, he is more to blame than the iron menagerie man, for he should know better than to put top-heavy peaks to pinnacles. His Gothic pinnacles are like slender candles, the same size all the way up, and are capped with extinguisher-like cones, larger than the shafts that support them. Thus the pinnacles, instead of adding grace and lightness to the structure, as they would if they had tapered to a point, seem to be placed there only to uphold purposeless caps of stone. They look top-heavy and have no beauty. An illustration of a blemish of opposite sort is seen in the front of a fashionable church on Fifth Avenue, New York, where a series of flying buttresses capable of sustaining the main tower, is made to hold up a little stone affair like a pigeon cote. That is bad decoration and bad architecture which does not secure harmonious relations between cause and effect, and which is not honest in the use of materials.